

The Hammer Times

Operation Enduring Freedom 07-09



Message from the Battalion Commander

The transfer of authority to the 877th Engineer Battalion, scheduled for the middle of next month, will end our Operation Enduring Freedom 08-09 tour and mark our redeployment back to Ft. Hood, Texas. We are thankful that our Soldiers and their Families have endured this lengthy separation. Thanks go out to the spouses, mothers, fathers, relatives, and friends of the battalion who have assisted in the care of our families and preparation for our return. We must also give thanks to our Family Support Groups and Rear Detachments as they maintained a vigilant effort in supporting both our Families and Soldiers.



**A worn but proud Engineer
Regiment Guidon**

Our efforts and contributions during this 15-month deployment include but were not limited to, construction, winterization of existing facilities, ensuring freedom of movement, and development of the Afghan workforce to include management of CERP projects. We partnered with joint forces (Seabee), LOGCAP, and Afghanistan local national and military construction assets in the construction of over \$133 million of contracted construction to key FOBs in RC-East and RC-South, to include CERP related projects. We provided horizontal and vertical construction support to maneuver forces throughout RC-East and RC-South. We planned and orchestrated the Engineer Skills Development Workshop, an initiative which provided Afghans with skilled labor, foremen and contractor level instruction and training to improve skills, increase contracting capability and job opportunities in Paktika Province and throughout Afghanistan. Our Soldiers built 6 new operating bases from company to brigade sizes, expanded 23 different forward operating bases, winterized 34 different forward operating bases, and improved traffic ability on 7 different routes.

Yes, we made the difference each and every day and I can proudly say this is the hardest working Engineer Battalion in the United States Army. In the end, we've made history by building the battlefield.



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Message from the Battalion Command Sergeant Major



As we wind down the deployment, our replacements (877th ENG BN) are Mobilized at Ft. McCoy, Wisconsin and preparing to depart for Afghanistan. Our Companies are leaning forward to set the conditions for a successful redeployment back. There is a lot of work to be accomplished before we can depart, packing containers and preparing for customs inspections to name a few. Once the 877th arrives we will have a challenging couple of weeks with the transition. In addition to the redeployment preparation we are continuing with the construction mission as well. There is no shortage of construction projects so there is plenty of work and the Companies continue to produce quality results despite harsh working conditions.

As I have stated before, the reintegration process of our Soldiers return home is a very delicate and deliberate process. We want the process to go as smooth as possible and I ask that everyone have patience as we go through that process. We want to complete it as rapidly as possible so our Soldiers can take their well deserved time off.

I want to thank everyone for their hard work and dedication on this deployment, without it the battalion would not have been as successful as it has been. Good Job! We are truly “building the battlefield”. Since this is our last installment of the monthly newsletter I would like to also thank the families, friends and supporters of the Battalion, your support has made this a much more “tolerable” deployment.

Memorial Weekend Luau

May ended with a bang, or “splash,” depending on who you were. Memorial Day weekend was celebrated at Sharana with an HSC/TOC sponsored Luau. Soldiers from HSC, 166th and 276th enjoyed a cookout on the Sunday prior to Memorial Day. While dominoes and card games were played by many, the highlight of the evening was watching over 20 Soldiers and Officers get randomly chosen and thrown into the kiddie pool. I think it's about time we come home.





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Headquarters and Support Company "Pale Riders"



Laying out items for inspection

The HSC Paleriders are extremely busy once again this month. It seems, however that everyone is more excited about preparations to go home. Many of you are aware that your Soldiers are sending items home. We have found that even out here we have slowly accumulated more things than we should. In addition to sending things home, we are also all packing our personal military gear and other equipment in order to get it ready for the necessary customs inspection in the middle of this month. After inspection we will send our containers on to the states while we await

our replacements, and finally our official flights home. We're fortunate to have a slight decrease in our operational tempo which allows the much needed time to prepare ourselves for the return home. There are still missions and tasks to accomplish however. The staff sections are all still very much engaged in their daily activities if not busier than ever preparing the systems for reintegration.

Our maintenance sections are still supporting repair and recovering operations for the battalion and for the company. This hard working group of Soldiers and NCOs are still the unsung heroes of the battalion. It is nothing short of amazing. Their work for the entire year is in full effect. One year ago it was common to have vehicles fail to make it from one base to another due to the state of disrepair of the fleet. Vehicles are now running efficiently and smoothly. This is a direct result of the incredible technical competence and work ethic of both the direct support and organizational maintenance sections.

The Equipment Platoon (i.e. EQ) completed their tasks in support of A Company and is now back and fully integrated into the company. The platoon has also executed various support missions for the battalion. They continue to assist the 166th Engineer Company in the quality control and quality assurance of a logistical support area construction project. EQ also transported equipment for the 68th CSE in order to allow them to continue preparing for their redeployment.



EQ spreads gravel at FOB Shank

It has been an honor to be deployed with the fine Soldiers, NCOs and Officers of the HSC Paleriders. I thank you for your support these last 14 months. Your unwavering efforts have made tremendous differences to every Soldier in the company. I would like to take this time to thank the HSC FRG. I look forward to recognizing each of you who volunteered on an individual basis upon our return. **THANK YOU VERY MUCH AND SEE YOU SOON!**

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Alpha Company "Gators"

A Co Gators continue their efforts into the fourteenth month of deployment. The Soldiers have worked hard this month, completing several facilities for Coalition Forces that will arrive next month. While missing family and looking forward to coming home next month, your Soldiers continue to make exceptional efforts and contribute much to the completion of our mission here in Afghanistan.

1st Platoon works diligently to support the tremendous growth on FOB Shank. They did an outstanding job on the maintenance office buildings that were constructed for Task Force Wings. The platoon finished out the month of May constructing a Battalion Headquarters office building for the incoming forces. SFC Baker and his Soldiers also worked diligently to receive and inventory equipment arriving from outlying bases, in order to prepare the platoon for redeployment to Fort Hood.

Doing what they do best, 2nd Platoon displayed outstanding craftsmanship while constructing a Company Headquarters office building for new Soldiers. SFC Pagan and his Soldiers now turn their focus on packing their equipment and preparing for their well deserved trip home to Fort Hood.

EM platoon has completed an astounding amount of work over the last month. They singlehandedly constructed COP McLain, a new combat outpost, completing the ground preparation, Hesco perimeter walls, Helicopter Landing Zone and troop living area in under two weeks. Immediately after successfully accomplishing that task, they shipped out and constructed an identical outpost, COP Sanchez, in another location. Their work ethic and dedication has surpassed all expectations.

Maintenance Platoon continues to support the company by servicing and repairing our heavy construction equipment, allowing EM to successfully conduct construction operations. The Soldiers have worked hard to install parts and maintain several pieces of construction equipment, keeping them operational for the remainder of our time in Afghanistan. The Soldiers of Headquarters Platoon continue to work hard to keep the company running smoothly and well supplied. The convoy team has been busy executing re-supply missions to keep both COP McLain and COP Sanchez supported with the necessary construction materials, equipment and personnel required to complete the mission.



Alpha Co working till sundown at FOB Shank



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68th Combat Support Equipment "Trailblazers"

The past 30 days has brought drastic change to the company's foot print and it has definitely been a welcomed adjustment. Having operated at the greatest of speeds for three months straight, completing our mission at FOB Wolverine was a much welcomed achievement. As the main force to break ground on this FOB expansion mission, the 68th CSE helped set the conditions to support an influx of U.S. Forces into RC South. Although travelling across Afghanistan in order to execute this task there is certainly no better way to close out this deployment. Every Soldier, NCO and Officer has practiced their trade and become appreciative of the capabilities of a horizontal construction company.



**SGT Schnacke and PFC Dority
receive impact AAM**

During the final weeks at FOB Wolverine 1st and 2nd PLT completed construction of nearly 8km of road while 3rd PLT closed out our final major construction project. Tasked with building yet another 200x300ft pad, 3PLT worked tirelessly to ensure the project was completed on schedule. With Operations at FOB Wolverine complete, the company then focused on retrograding equipment and personnel back FOB Orgun-E in preparation for redeployment.

Moving back to FOB Orgun-E however, was no small task. With limited air support, our troops got the opportunity to catch up on rest as they spent countless hours waiting in terminals at Kandahar, Bagram and FOB Sharana in hopes of catching a flight from one location to the next. Slowly but surely the entire trailblazer team made it back to OE. Redeployment tasks, though mundane can't keep the Soldiers spirits down. After 14 months in theater, away from friends and family we are all willing to empty our containers and bags as many times as it takes to be headed home in July.

Soon the battalion will redeploy to Fort Hood. I want to remind everyone to be cautious of rumors and arrival dates. The biggest re-deployment key to remember is: Everything is subject to change and the only official information will come from the Rear-D/FRG/FRSA. Finally I would like to thank every Soldier, NCO, Officer, and loved one that has sacrificed so much over the past year. Although the birthdays, anniversaries and special events in ones life cannot be recuperated, I pray that we find solace in knowing the sacrifices endured during the past year have strengthened bonds and profoundly affected the lives of thousands in ways that we will never fully understand and or appreciate.



New Trailblazers welcomed to
the company

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FOB Wolverine under construction.

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166th EN Co

The 166th Engineer Company out of Winfield, Alabama continues to push forward toward successful completion of the many missions assigned to them since their arrival at FOB Sharana in April. In keeping with the proud tradition of their predecessor, the 62nd Engineer Battalion, they continue to adapt and overcome. Initial projects include making improvements to their living quarters, TOC expansions, adding a new CRSP yard, and starting the construction of a new ECP.

With our help the face of FOB Sharana is changing for the better. In fact, throughout much of FOB Sharana you will find 166th Engineer Company Soldiers hard at work improving the quality of life for those that live and work here.



The 166th has been busy elsewhere also. 2nd platoon was sent to FOB Wolverine and became actively involved in the construction of B-Huts and Guard towers. Completing the B-Huts and Guard Towers ahead of schedule confirmed the commitment and dedication of your Soldiers.

Since then 3rd platoon has been tasked to do B-Huts and Guard Towers at another FOB. It is with no doubt we will see this mission through to completion with equally successful results.

Winterization is another area that the 166th Engineer Company has taken the lead. It's hard to appreciate Soldiers travelling to remote FOBs doing winterization projects in the middle of summer. But come winter the efforts of these Soldiers will truly be appreciated.



The Soldiers of the 166th Engineer Company come from many different backgrounds, possessing varying levels of construction experience. Despite the fact that many of them only work in their MOS during monthly battle assemblies and/or annual training, these Soldiers as a whole, have pulled together working long hours to insure successful mission accomplishment. It has been the start of what appears will be a very busy year. The 166th along with the support of the 1613th are poised to accept the challenges that this tour will bring.

- Essayons

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1613 EN CO

1613th ESC has completed a considerable amount of construction in its first full month in country. First and fourth platoons have been doing earthwork this month at COP Xio Haq. Second platoon continues the work on the B-Huts at COP Penich, and began work on a SEA Hut. Headquarters and Maintenance are busy supporting the work at COP Xio Haq, COP Penich, Bostick, and Bari-Alai while also preparing for winterization.



Fourth Platoon at COP Xia Haq

Fourth platoon has made great progress at COP Xio Haq, constructing guard towers and multiple B-Huts. They also have a squad currently at OP Bari Alai doing improvements and repairs. They will soon have two teams that will conduct winterization assessments of COPs, OPs', and FOBs'. The purpose of the winterization assessments is to ensure the quality of life is good at these various places during the winter, especially in the higher elevations.



First Platoon moving dirt at COP Xia Haq

Maintenance spent the last month working tirelessly to ensure that our equipment was up and running. From changing oil, to changing transmissions, they have met the challenge head on and accomplished all tasks given to them, not only with quality but in a timely manner also.

HQ platoon has put in endless hours, ensuring success for all platoons on ground. Continuing to receive the supplies and assets needed to accomplish every mission in a timely manner. HQ also ensures that the Soldiers receive mail and other personal

items and thus keeping them in contact with home.

The Convoy Team has been busy convoying supplies and personnel to job sites and returning any unused equipment from job sites. Any down time they get is used safety and tactical training. Thanks to C Company 62nd, our transition has been almost seamless. The knowledge and training received from them have helped give us the confidence needed to make this deployment a successful one. As we say goodbye to C Company, we focus on making our mark in Afghanistan.

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Soldier Highlights

Alpha Co Soldier of the Month



Hailing from Fairfield, OH, SPC Conradt has been a Soldier in 1st Platoon, Alpha Company since he joined the Army in July 2005. While deployed to Afghanistan, SPC Conradt has shown exceptional work and outstanding technical knowledge through several construction missions. His pre-Army prior experience as a carpenter made him a great example to other Soldiers in his platoon. At COP Deysie, he took the lead building five guard towers, installing plumbing for laundry, shower, and latrine facilities, and acted as a Quality Control Officer for local

nationals during construction. Now working at FOB Shank, SPC Conradt's dedication to mission completion has been instrumental part of the construction of a 3600 square ft battalion TOC. His commitment, enthusiasm and experience are an invaluable asset to 1st Platoon.

68th Co Soldier of the Month

PFC Loring is this month's Soldier of the Month due to his great attitude and willingness to accomplish any task in a timely manner with limited guidance. Although he is in a unit that works largely outside his MOS as an 88M (truck driver), PFC Loring goes out of his way to learn about engineer tasks and equipment. His motivation is obvious to his chain of command and peers alike as he is always asking his supervisor what to do next upon completion of his assigned task. PFC Loring is a dedicated Soldier, and his hard work is appreciated by anyone who works with him.



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Soldier Highlights

HSC Soldier of the Month

SPC Derrick Meyer hails from Dubois, Indiana. He received an Associate of Science degree in Architectural Technology and Construction Management from Indiana State University. He enlisted in OCT of 2006 and joined the HSC Paleriders on June 22, 2007. SPC Meyer is one of the most technically proficient Soldiers in the S-3 Technical Engineer Section. SPC Meyer stepped up and acted as an NCO in the absence of leadership. He performed above all expectations and proved himself as a leader. SPC Meyer was responsible for the following: survey and design of FOB Shank Phase II Expansion which included aviation landing/parking zones, maintenance clamshells, Fest tents, a DFAC, SEA Huts, B-Huts, FSSP, internal roads and drainage, and an LSA for the Coalition Forces. SPC Meyer convoyed with Alpha Company as a team leader to two different locations and performed topographical surveys while continuing survey support at FOB Shank. He then assisted 168th EN BDE (TF Storm) with a proposed design for the area that was later used to begin construction for Coalition Forces. SPC Meyer is among the best the Paleriders have to offer and has a very bright future ahead.



1613 Recognition for Outstanding Service



SSG David Kozinski is
1613's NCO of the Month



SPC Donald Adams is
1613 Soldier of the month

166th Soldier of the Month

SPC Byrd is the 166th Soldier of the Month because of his invaluable assistance with the BDE TOC project. Though only a Specialist, he was chosen as Project Leader because of the twenty years of carpentry and construction experience he brings with him from his civilian career. His responsibilities include planning project timelines, figuring BOM requirements, and adjusting and overseeing building specifications.

Although he has had prior service experience from 90'91', SPC Byrd has only been in the AL ARNG for one year. We are proud to have him as a part of our deployment team.



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Packin' Up Pandemonium

Below you see some of the efforts being made to get back home. Before the connexes can be loaded, customs officials need to check the items being take back to the states. On June 15th HSC Platoons were out in the Connex yard setting out all of their items to be shipped back to Fort Hood. It is a monumental task, but few are complaining about the work. Hmmmm, makes ya wonder if these Soldiers are ready to get home. Unfortunately, the weather delayed the customs officials so we'll be doing all of this again at a later date. But one way or the other, we're comin' home.



Working together



Packin' it up nice and neat



Accounting for every little tool and part before it can be shipped back to the states.



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A Little CH EEZ

Greetings 62nd Family,

I know by speaking to soldiers, my wife Grey, and family members that even though we are in the final countdown of the deployment, stress, anxieties, and disappointments are still a part of our everyday experiences. There is a growing excitement around here about getting home. But there is also a lot of work to do in order to get there. I'm sure it's the same at home. I would love to say "Praise the Lord!" and hope for the best as we move towards re-integration. But alas...wishful thinking is no substitute for preparation and hard work.

With the children being out of school, I'm sure schedules are changing dramatically for many. Lives are busy, stress is high and time seems to be standing still. But there are some things that you and your Soldier can start working on now to ensure that your family reunion is a happy one. First, check your expectations. Nothing robs a couple of the joy of being together than unrealistic and unmet expectations. Turn expectations into hopes (there is a difference, really) and you will be much less likely to be disappointed. If your spouse meets or exceeds your hopes you can count your blessings together. If they don't, oh well, they were only hopes. And there is always a next time. Second, be very careful of judging your partner for the things he or she is or is not doing to your satisfaction. I like the old Native American proverb, "Judge me not until you have walked a mile in my moccasins". Both Soldier and spouse have had difficulties during the past fifteen months. Focus on the successful accomplishments of each rather than the one or two things you might have done differently. And third, remember that it takes on average ten positive, affirming comments to undo the damage caused by one hateful comment that slipped out in anger. The writer of Proverbs likens the tongue as a bow which can shoot fiery arrows straight to the soul of another. When all else seems to fail, guard your tongue. You'll be glad you did in the long run.

Blessings All
We'll be home soon

CH EEZ

TF Hammer Chaplain
FOB Sharana



SFC Grenier and I smiling at the thought of coming home.
Well... that's why I'm smiling anyway.

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